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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

*Memorandum*



THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 0600

28 FEBRUARY 1965

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
Office of Current Intelligence  
28 February 1965

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Vietnam as of 0600 EST

Communist Political Developments

1. The release yesterday of a US white paper on the North Vietnamese campaign to conquer South Vietnam elicited a quick rebuttal from Peiping. In a broadcast this morning, the official Chinese News Agency (NCNA) characterized the report as an "excuse...for new aggression against the DRV." Labeling the exposure of a Viet Cong arms carrying ship as an obvious "concoction," the broadcast attempted to belittle the significance of the recently discovered cache by noting that the vessel reportedly brought into the area "large stores of war materiel" including "a 57mm recoilless gun of Chinese Communist manufacture." So far, Moscow's reaction has been limited to a TASS commentary which suggested that the title be changed to "An Aggressor's White Paper."

2. The Hanoi regime issued its first major statement on the Vietnamese situation in over a week in its main party paper today. It appears to have the dual purpose of attempting to deter further US action against North Vietnam and, at the same time, to diminish the impact of the recently discovered North Vietnamese arms shipment to the Viet Cong. Reaching back as far as November 1961, when it alleged a US C-47 transport aircraft was "caught red-handed" over North Vietnam, the editorial cited a series of developments proving conclusively, it contended, the existence of a US "escalation plan" to expand the war into North Vietnam. Although Peiping and Moscow have already done so, in this editorial Hanoi has for the first time authoritatively stated that the situation

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seriously threatens peace in "Indochina, Southeast Asia, and the world."

3. Communist China has not commented on Kosygin's 26 February report on his Asian trip. A brief commentary from Hanoi ignored Kosygin's reference to an Indochina solution "at the conference table," but repeated Kosygin's demand for withdrawal of US troops and his pledge of assistance to North Vietnam.

4. Yesterday the North Vietnamese lodged a routine protest with the ICC charging that the dispatch of South Korean soldiers to South Vietnam is a "gross" violation of the Geneva accords.

Communist Military Developments

5. No Chinese Communist or North Vietnamese military deployments connected with the Vietnam situation have been detected in the last 24 hours.

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8. Hanoi has broadcast a report on DRV naval preparedness in which references to an enemy "surprise attack" seem to be directed not against alleged South

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Vietnamese coastal raids but against a possible US seaborne invasion of North Vietnam.

Political Activity in South Vietnam

9. The Quat cabinet met on Friday primarily to discuss government policy in the light of the recent spate of pamphlets and groups calling for an end to the war.

the consensus was strongly against any negotiated peace and that Quat will announce this on 1 March. The cabinet also decided to fire 300 civil servants who, together with 73 private citizens, had signed a document on 16 February calling for a negotiated settlement of the war.

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10. General Thi has told the press that he is relinquishing command of the "Capital Liberation Forces," which quelled the 19 February coup, and is returning to his I Corps command in Hue. Thi, however, is still the most powerful figure on the Armed Forces Council.

11. Prominent South Vietnamese military and civilian circles continue to foresee an early power struggle within the armed forces, and possibly a series of power plays and purges. Marine commander Khang, himself a possible purge target of General Thi, says he and other colleagues fear a complete disintegration of military unity, and predicts that General Khanh may even have to be summoned back. Southern Dai Viet leaders also predict a "chain reaction" of purges. These leaders claim that only a few of their military members were involved in the 19 February coup attempt, and that they are supporting the Quat government.

12. Buddhist Institute chairman Thich Tam Chau reportedly has met with General Thi three times since 21 February. According to Tam Chau, General Thi is "favorable" to both Chau and rival Buddhist leader Thich Tri Quang. Tam Chau returned to Saigon on 21 February from central Vietnam where he was drumming up support for himself among Buddhist congregations. Chau's influence and prestige reportedly have been on the decline since Tri Quang's successful direction of the Buddhist campaign to bring down the Huong government.

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13. General Khanh left Hong Kong today. He will arrive in New York via Paris on or about 5 March.

Viet Cong Military Activity

14. A camouflaged vessel estimated to be about 80 feet long was attacked and badly damaged by South Vietnamese aircraft yesterday afternoon off the coast of Kien Hoa Province. At last report, the ship was burning and sinking near the shore. About 30 persons garbed in the black uniforms associated with the Viet Cong were sighted on the deck just prior to the airstrikes. A local junk force, supported by a Vietnamese naval vessel, is moving to the area and a US photoreconnaissance mission will be dispatched there as soon as possible.

15. Kien Hoa Province and the adjacent province of Vinh Binh have long been associated with Viet Cong seaborne infiltration. The Viet Cong have established major strongholds in the dense mangrove swamps that cover the eastern portions of the two provinces. From these receiving areas, weapons and supplies are reportedly moved inland at night along the branches of the Mekong River.

16. Farther to the north, off Binh Thuan Province, another suspect vessel was sighted on the evening of 25 February. However, subsequent efforts to locate the craft have not met with success thus far.

17. For the past two weeks small bands of Viet Cong and Communist influenced mountain tribesmen have been active in the area around Ban Me Thuot, haranguing local villagers about a planned attack on Ban Me Thuot in the near future. Such boasts are made frequently by the Viet Cong for propaganda purposes, but in view of the deteriorating security situation in this region, a raid on Ban Me Thuot remains a distinct possibility. A captured Viet Cong document, received shortly after the 10 February bombing of the Qui Nhon billet, designated US installations at Pleiku, Qui Nhon, Quang Ngai, Kontum, and Ban Me Thuot, in that order, for attack.

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